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November 28, 2012

The Honorable Barack Obama
President
United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Harry Reid
Majority Leader
United States Senate
S-221 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate
S-230 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable John Boehner
Speaker of the House
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204 The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear President Obama, Leader Reid, Speaker Boehner, Leader McConnell, and Leader Pelosi,

As you negotiate a plan to avoid the “fiscal cliff” and bring our budget back into balance to help spur economic growth, I write to share with you the perspective and priorities of the district I represent, priorities that are shared by communities throughout the country. These include making a real down payment on our national debt, preventing deep cuts from undermining our fragile economic recovery and harming our national security, incorporating broadly shared sacrifices, and protecting the guarantees of Social Security, Medicare, and veterans’ benefits.

As you know, failure to find consensus will mean triggering sharp tax increases on middle class families who have been hard hit by this recession. It will mean devastating cuts to education, community development, food and product safety, air traffic control, and federal criminal prosecutions. It will mean longer wait times for the approval of life-saving pharmaceuticals and medical devices, fewer agents patrolling our borders, and canceled contracts with businesses employing millions of private sector workers, including many in my district. As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, I know it also has the potential to undermine our nation’s security.

I supported the more than \$900 billion in initial cuts made in the Budget Control Act to both defense and non-defense spending because I recognize the need to phase in spending cuts over

the next ten years, just as I support allowing the Bush tax cuts on income over \$250,000 to expire. But I also know that allowing the sequester to make mindless across-the-board cuts on top of those already enacted and letting the Bush tax cuts expire for the middle class risks putting our economy and our people at great harm.

Avoiding the consequences of stalemate will require reaching a deal that includes shared sacrifices. Both parties will have to make concessions. This is both just and pragmatic. As conservative columnist David Brooks has noted, a deal that demands sacrifice from one group but not another is not sustainable in our democracy over the long run. To return our deficits to the surpluses we ran in the late 1990s and pay down our long-term debt will require a sustained commitment from the entire nation, a commitment that will only come if a deal is seen as fair.

With those principles in mind, I believe that a plan that truly addresses the challenges we face should include new revenue from those who are best able to afford it, asking the wealthiest Americans to return to the income tax rates that existed during the 1990s, and ending tax breaks for oil companies that receive billions of dollars in federal subsidies even as they are turning record-breaking profits.

Likewise, it is important that we make reforms to all components of federal spending, including entitlement programs, and we continue to look for targeted cuts to defense and domestic programs. I support efforts to strengthen Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid for years to come, but will reject any attempts to privatize these programs, or to turn them into block grants or vouchers that transfer those costs onto those least able to afford it. After years of paying into these programs, our seniors and those about to retire deserve the peace of mind knowing that their retirement security is protected and that they won't have to deplete a lifetime of savings if they require longer hospital stays, assisted living, or a complicated surgery. Similarly, we must ensure we have the resources to adequately care for our veterans so that they need never doubt that they will have the care and benefits they have earned following their service to our nation.

A responsible plan that reduces the deficit in a balanced way while protecting American jobs is possible. It is also vital to our nation's economic strength and prosperity. Thank you for your leadership and for your consideration. I look forward to working with you to ensure that our nation pays its bills and protects our future.

Sincerely,



Niki Tsongas
Member of Congress